FEATURE

A Secret Invasion

The University in Exile and Conspiracy Theories

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WEEK OF JANUARY 15

POLITICS
NATIONALISM
CLIMATE CHANGE

EDITOR'S PICKS

SEX & GENDER
I Was Called, Too
January 20, 2020 • Kristopher Burrell

IMPEACHMENT
Impeachment and Rousseau's General Will
January 15, 2020 • David Williams

PODCAST
The Australian Bushfires
January 14, 2020 • Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, Nicole Hemmer, Neil J. Young

EDITOR'S PICKS
How I Knew the #CovingtonBoys Video Was Clickbait
January 24, 2019 • Claire Potter

The National Civic Federation Review April 10, 1919

"Who's Who" in "The New School"

DID THE "NEW CLASS OF LEADERS" SPECIALIZING IN "THE REFORM OF SOCIAL EVILS" EVER ENGAGE IN SHADOW HUN, SHADOW BOLSHEVIST OR OTHER UNAMERICAN PROPAGANDA?

By T. EVERETT HARRÉ

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Conspiracy theories offer alternative explanations for shocking historical events and sweeping cultural changes. They simplify complex socio-political factors and processes into seductive narratives of Good versus Evil. They are the opium of those who believe that they are on the wrong side of history, yet imagine that God is on their side. Yet, the rise of fake news and fascism suggests that conspiracism has gained significant ideological ground in American politics. While many of us would prefer to ignore the existence of conspiracy theories altogether, we must acknowledge that they have become one of the most pressing political issues of our time. Scholars and students should perhaps pay attention especially to those conspiracy theories that implicate them directly. In his 2011 book *Revolution from Above*, Kerry Bolton takes aim at The New School for Social Research as one of the targets in a grand conspiracy theory about the secret plot to transform the world into an oligarchical collectivist state.

According to Bolton, the New School was established in 1919 to spread the ideology of Fabian Socialism in America. John Dewey — whose educational philosophies helped form the school — wanted The New School to promote his brand of "progressive education" and offer a theoretical defense for the collectivist economic policies of the New Deal. The Rockefeller Foundation sponsored the "University in Exile" and the "Emergency Program for European Scholars" to smuggle Marxist intellectuals into America and "lay the foundations for the new schools of sociology and psychology that continue to dominate the academia of the entire West.[1] The New School's Board of Trustees is crammed full of globalist plutocrats who plan to use these left-wing scholars as ground-troops in their assault on "Tradition." Under plutocratic control, higher education is intellectual warfare.

The unlikely cooperation of Marxist scholars and philanthropists is a key dynamic of what Bolton calls "dialectical capitalism."[2] He argues that "communism and the New Left, feminism, and other supposed 'revolts' were part of a *dialectic* for the purposes of destroying tradition […] in order to create a mass of producers and consumers as part of what Aldous Huxley called a 'World State.'"[3] Globalist philanthropists such as George Soros bankroll activists to ensure that every struggle for emancipation and equality in fact leads to greater oppression. Feminism, for instance, disintegrates the traditional bonds and obligations of motherhood, and allows women to become exploited as wage-workers. Gender equality is part of the globalist strategy to dissolve the family-unit and increase dependence on the State. The alleged "synthesis" of this dialectic is the creation of a World Collectivist State that Bolton describes as "a World Order that will be communistic in organization but run by oligarchs."[4]

Bolton's thesis is a classic example of what American historian Richard Hofstadter described as "the big leap from the undeniable to the unbelievable" that characterizes most conspiracy theories. To the untrained and uncritical reader, Bolton's book seems meticulously researched. Every page overflows with footnotes. Yet, undeniable facts are consistently interwoven with unbelievable fictions. Scraps of information are taken radically out of context and presented as evidence for the existence of a malignant oligarchical conspiracy. It is undeniable that Dewey influenced the founding of The New School, that the Rockefeller Foundation partly funded the University in Exile, and that a few Marxist scholars have occupied teaching posts and research positions at the institution. Nonetheless, Bolton leaps from these facts into an unbelievable narrative about a hidden plot to establish a World Collectivist State.

Bolton's attack on The New School contributes to a tradition of American conspiracy theorizing that has endured since the mid-twentieth century. Specifically, his work builds on enduring right-wing myths about the Fabian Society and the Frankfurt School. In 1964, the author and preacher John A. Stormer wrote the conspiracist classic *None Dare Call It Treason* to warn American citizens that communists had infiltrated churches, the education system, the media, the labor movement, and the medical establishment. According to Stormer, the tactic of communist infiltration originated with the Fabian Society in England. Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw worked together to develop a variety of socialism that would appeal to young scholars, instead of industrial laborers. They believed that "eventually these *intellectual* revolutionaries would acquire power and influence in the official and unofficial opinion-making and power-wielding agencies of the world." [5] Changing people's opinions would be the first step toward building "a socialistic, one-world order." [6]

Building on Stormer's allegations, Bolton explains that — in a classic twist of dialectical capitalism — Webb and Shaw secured generous funding from the Rothschild family to establish the London School of Economics in 1895. For the Fabian Society, universities functioned as ostensibly innocuous channels for transmitting collectivist propaganda. Following Webb and Shaw's example, Dewey conspired to convert young American intellectuals to the pernicious doctrine of Fabian Socialism through The New School.

Several decades later, Dewey's brood of American socialist intellectuals were joined by what Bolton calls "the German counterpart of Fabianism," The Frankfurt School (otherwise known as the Institute for Social Research).[7] Although only one member of the Frankfurt School — Erich Fromm — actually taught at The New School, Bolton sees the "University of Exile" facilitating the integration of "Frankfurtian Marxists" into American intellectual life. [8] Bolton would not be the first to infer a firmer connection between the two institutions of "social research." Citing Pat Buchanan's 2002 *The Death of the West*, Bolton claims that the thinkers of the Frankfurt School travelled to America in the 1930s to besmirch traditional American values and destroy Western Civilization. The Frankfurt School denounced the conventional family-unit as "fascistic," and encouraged the youth of America to indulge their sexual impulses. Fromm and Herbert Marcuse called for the liberation of *eros* from stifling moral codes. For Buchanan and Bolton this sexual liberation engendered feminism, which, in turn, caused birth rates to plummet in North America and Europe. Bolton appears to agree with Buchanan's assertion that the Frankfurt School is responsible for the murder of the West.

In his 2018 article " Cultural Marxism: Origins, Development, and Significance," Bolton further implies that the Frankfurt School devised the theoretical rationale for Gender and Sexuality Studies at The New School. While it is true that the Gender and Sexuality Studies program (which Bolton mistakes for a department!) teaches queer theory, deconstructs traditional gender relations, and promotes themes of social justice, Bolton imagines that these forms of research, inquiry, and critique benefit collectivist and oligarchical agendas. For Bolton, The New School is a Soros-sponsored laboratory for testing new radical ideas before they are injected into mainstream culture, such as the "controversial" idea that sexuality is a "social construct."

Both Buchanan and Bolton admonish women and queer people for failing to obey traditional social and sexual norms. Feminists are portrayed as too selfish to raise families; queer people are depicted as too irresponsible to become members of a respectable society. The contentious debates over the legalization of gay marriage and the transgender bathroom controversy illustrate that the radical right often targets and demonizes queer people. Buchanan, Bolton, and their fellow right-wing authors seem convinced that pernicious "Cultural Marxists" at The New School and other college campuses brainwashed the American people into believing that queer people deserve equal rights. Although LGBTQ+ advocacy and activism are a crucial extension of the American Civil Rights movement, Bolton argues that the whole affair is a deliberate outcome of the collectivist oligarchy's assault on Tradition.

Some people think that it is a waste of time to devote scholarly attention to these conspiracy theories. After all, conspiracy theorists often dismiss anyone who doubts their credibility, debunks their claims, or disagrees with their worldview. Yet, Bolton's writings function as part of a larger *metapolitical* project to contest liberal values and promote right-wing identitarian politics. As part of this metapolitical project, Bolton's conspiracy theory preys on genuine economic precarity and cultural anxiety. For instance, he re-directs post-2008-financial-crisis contempt for Wall Street into an irrational fear of "progressive" politics. In the end, reactionary identitarianism is offered as the only way to resist dialectical capitalism.

Bolton's caricature of The New School is an attempt to devalue and discredit the humanities, the social sciences, and critical inquiry in general. According to Bolton, émigré intellectuals and nefarious philanthropists have hoodwinked American students. Any academic critique of social and economic inequality is covert propaganda for the globalist oligarchy. Bolton strives to persuade his readers that only anti-academic conspiracy theorists can be trusted to tell the truth about modern history and politics. Cultural critics and social scientists need to investigate these conspiracist narratives to recognize the historical conditions that give rise to them, and expose the political agendas that they represent. The fight against the radical right must take place not only in the streets, but also in universities like The New School.

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[1] Kerry Bolton, *Revolution from Above* (London: Arktos, 2011), 108.

[2] Bolton, *Revolution from Above*, 9.

[3] Ibid, 50.

[4] Ibid, 251.

[5] 5. John A. Stormer, *None Dare Call It Treason* (Florissant: The Liberty Bell Press, 1964), 21.

[6] Stormer, *None Dare Call It Treason*, 21.

[7] Bolton, *Revolution from Above*, 101.

[8] Ibid, 108.

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